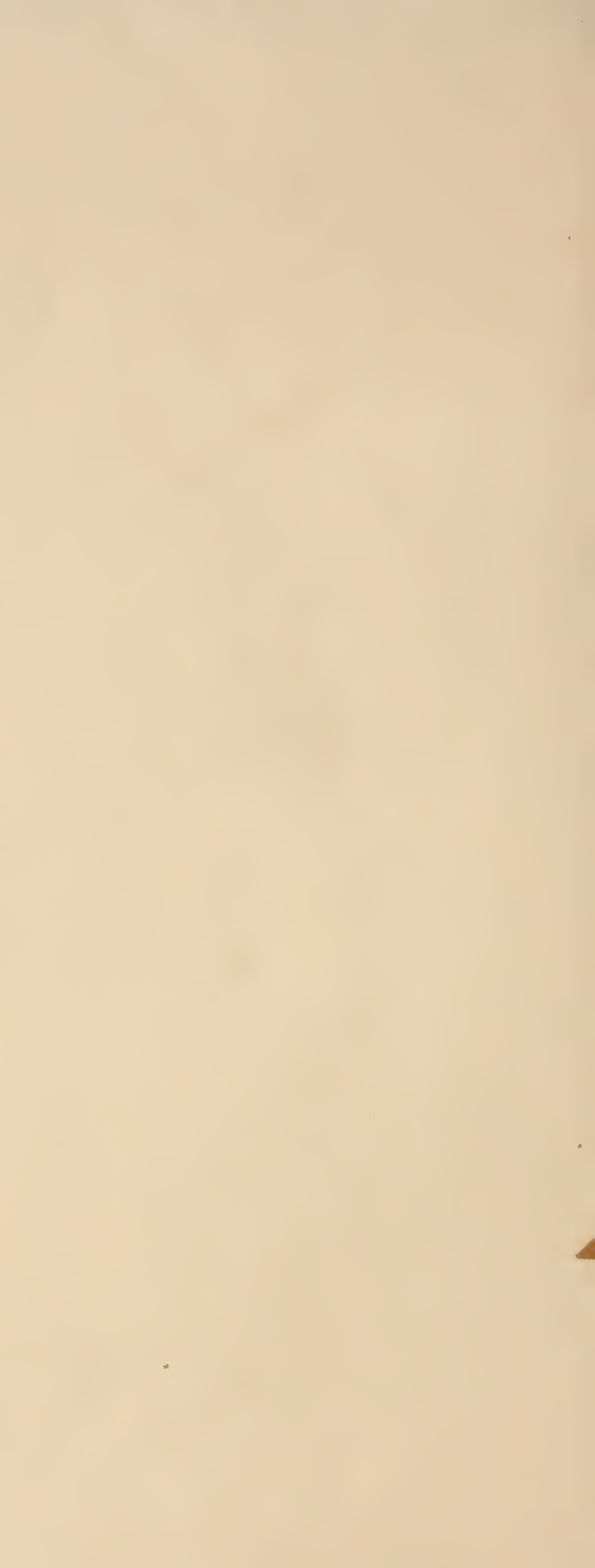


Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.





1291

(S)

United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

Program Aid Number 1291

1
Ag 84/ro
Copy 2

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Distribution Program





U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Through the Food Distribution Program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides foods to help meet many of the nutritional needs of children and needy adults.

The program has a twofold purpose. First, it improves the nutritional quality of the diets of the many people participating in USDA food programs. Second, it helps strengthen the agricultural market for products produced by American farmers.

For example, USDA buys some products grown by the farmers that are in plentiful supply. USDA then distributes these products, through its various Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) programs, to children in schools and child care centers, to elderly people, certain needy families, and other special populations.



WHO BENEFITS FROM THE PROGRAM?

Beneficiaries of the Food Distribution Program include:

- **Children** participating in the National School Lunch Program, Child Care Food Program, or Summer Food Service Program for Children. They eat donated foods as part of the meals served in these programs. Children attending child care institutions, nonprofit summer camps, and schools that receive commodities benefit from USDA-donated foods.

The foods purchased especially for the National School Lunch Program are based on the nutritional needs of the children, school preferences as reflected in State food preference reports, and the market supplies and prices of the foods. Schools may receive both monetary aid and donated foods. This helps schools expand their lunch programs to reach more children with nutritionally sound meals.



- **Needy families** living in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. USDA and the Trust Territory's authorities worked together to develop a food package that meets the nutritional needs of the islanders and their cultural and dietary habits.

Each participating household receives a specific number of cans or pounds of each food in their package on a monthly basis. The categories of food remain constant, but USDA makes every effort to vary the foods within each category. The Trust Territory's authorities are responsible for determining the amount of each food item that the program participants receive. USDA then supplies only the amount of food that the Trust Territory's authorities request.

- **Indian households** located on or near their tribal reservations. In instances where both the Food Stamp and the Food Distribution Program operate on the same reservation, households cannot participate in both programs at the same time.

The Food Distribution Program provides a variety of foods that are designed to help participants maintain a healthy diet. The foods provided are based on a specific number of cans or pounds of each category of food for each person per month. Every effort is made to distribute different food items in each category each month to offer more variety in the participants' diets.

In addition to receiving donated foods, members of tribes participating in this program are taught about nutrition, food storage techniques, and sanitary ways to prepare food.

- **Pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, as well as infants and children up to 6 years of age.** Through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) these participants receive donated foods in food packages.

Women, infants, and children may participate once they are certified on the basis of their inadequate income. The foods included in the food package are tailored to meet the special nutritional needs of the program participants. Participants also receive training about nutrition and preparing food.

- **Victims of certain emergencies or disasters.**

USDA makes commodities available to victims of disasters who are in need of food.

When a disaster forces people to evacuate their homes, stocks of USDA foods stored in school storerooms, local distributing depots, and county- or State-controlled warehouses may be used in meals served to people at central locations. FNS field staff are on hand at disaster sites to assist and advise State, local, and Federal forces in carrying out emergency functions, such as transporting food. Disaster relief agencies, which include welfare agencies, military organizations, church groups, and charitable organizations, offer assistance by preparing meals with donated foods and serving these meals at central locations to the disaster victims. In some very severe situations, the Secretary of Agriculture may authorize food to be distributed directly to households.

- **Senior citizens over the age of 60 and their spouses.** They are eligible for donated foods through meals served by the National Nutrition Services for the Elderly. This program is part of the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging. If senior citizens are homebound, meals using commodities may be delivered to their homes.

The quantity of foods or cash each State receives for its nutrition program for the elderly is based on the level of assistance per meal legislated by Congress and on the number of eligible meals served. Where USDA permission is granted, participants may pay for the meals with food stamps.

- **Campers** attending nonprofit summer camps for children. Donated foods are not available for use by summer camps for adults or for weekend or overnight trips.
- **Needy people** of any age served by charitable institutions, such as homes for the aged, hospitals offering general and long-term health care, correctional institutions, soup kitchens, meals-on-wheels programs, and orphanages that are not participating in other USDA child nutrition programs.

HOW DOES USDA GET FOOD?

USDA acquires food for donation in three ways:

—USDA buys food on the open market with funds that it receives by direct appropriation from Congress. USDA gives these foods to schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program and other child nutrition programs, sites that participate in nutrition services for the elderly, Indians on reservations, and participants in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

—USDA buys fruits, vegetables, meat, and poultry items under surplus-removal programs, as authorized by Section 32 of Public Law 320, as amended. Section 32 allows USDA to buy food that exceeds normal needs, thereby removing it from the standard channels of trade. USDA buys the food to strengthen farm income and then donates it to programs, most of which are school food programs.



—USDA obtains other foods, such as grains, dairy products, vegetable oil, and peanut products, through price support activities that help farmers achieve a fair return for their products. Food acquired under this legislation may be donated to domestic outlets under Section 416 of the Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended.

Food packers, growers, and processors bid competitively for USDA contracts for providing this food. Invitations to bid are publicly announced, as are awards of USDA purchases.

HOW DOES USDA PROCESS AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOOD?

USDA pays for the initial processing and packaging of food and for transporting it to designated locations within each State. USDA donates foods to States when they request them, and in the amounts requested, to the extent possible. Once the food has been transported to locations in each State, the food becomes the responsibility of the State distributing agency.



The State distributing agency is responsible for storing the food, transporting it throughout the State, and ensuring distribution of the food at the local level to eligible recipients. The State distributing agencies and FNS cooperate to help assure the greatest benefits from donated foods. They provide local agencies and program recipients with technical assistance, recipes, and information on proper storage methods and food preparation techniques.

WHAT TYPES OF FOOD ARE AVAILABLE?

The specific foods that USDA donates may vary from time to time depending on what farm products are available. Because of the nutritional needs of participants in programs that receive donated foods, such as the National School Lunch Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, the National Nutrition Services for the Elderly, and the Needy Family Program, USDA purchases and makes available certain types of foods.

Foods generally available include frozen and canned meat and poultry; canned and frozen fruits, vegetables, and juices; dairy products; cereals and grains; vegetable oil and shortening; and peanut products. USDA also provides donated foods, such as infant formula and cereal for children, to meet the special needs of some program participants. When supplying specific cultural groups (such as Indians and participants in the Trust Territory) with commodities, administrators take into consideration the ethnic food preferences of these groups.

USDA has been increasing the kinds of food available for donation. Today, more than 50 kinds of foods are donated for distribution to the various programs.

USDA has also increased the amount of time allowed for shipping fruits and vegetables to States. This makes storage easier and allows State programs to offer fresh produce more often.

HOW DOES USDA ASSURE SAFETY AND QUALITY?

All of the food that USDA purchases must be certified by the Department's inspection services to meet established specifications. Only high grades of meat, fruits, and vegetables are accepted.

Specifications for quality of the foods that USDA purchases have been updated. The revised specifications have reduced the fat, sugar, and salt contents of foods purchased for donation. For example, USDA is buying unsalted peanuts, canned meats with less salt, ground beef with a lower fat content, and ketchup with a lower sugar content. The specifications for canned fruits now require either light syrup or fruit juices as the packing medium.



Updated specifications also improve the cooking quality of the foods purchased for donation. Specifications for the flour used in macaroni and spaghetti have been changed to assure that these products donated by USDA have desirable cooking qualities.

State distributing agencies have current information on the foods that are available for donation. They can answer questions about what commodities are available through the program and what commodities they expect to receive.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You may obtain information on USDA's food distribution programs from:

Food Distribution Division
Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Alexandria, VA 22302

Food & Nutrition Service Regional Offices

Northeast Regional Office

Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
33 North Avenue
Burlington, MA 01803

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York,
Rhode Island, Vermont

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office

Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
One Vahlsing Center
Robbinsville, NJ 08691

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C.,
Virginia, West Virginia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

Southeast Regional Office

Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1100 Spring Street, N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30367

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina,
South Carolina, Tennessee

Midwest Regional Office

Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
50 East Washington Street
Chicago, IL 60602

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

Mountain Plains Regional Office

Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
2420 W. 26th Avenue
Suite 415-D
Denver, CO 80211

Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

Southwest Regional Office

Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1100 Commerce Street
Dallas, TE 75242

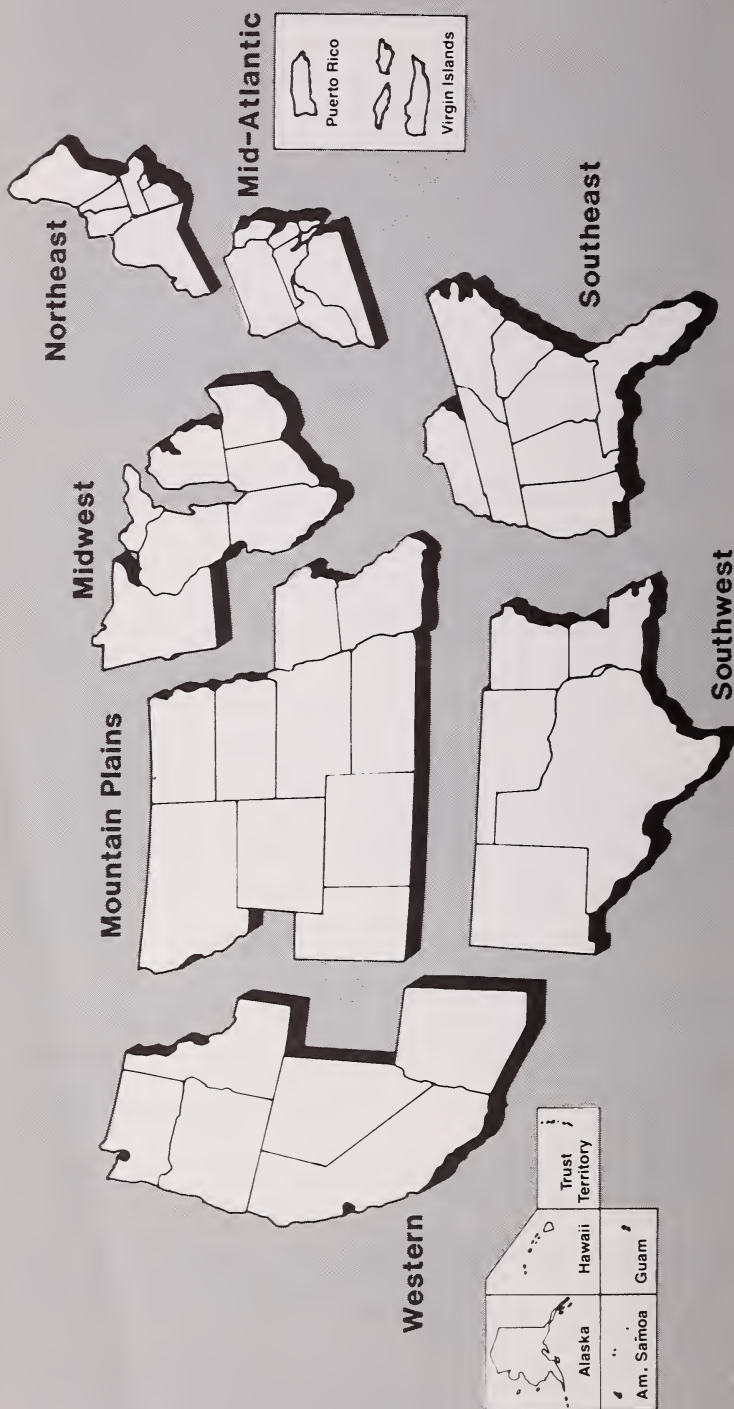
Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Western Regional Office

Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
550 Kearny Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Guam, Idaho, Nevada,
Oregon, Trust Territory, Washington

Food and Nutrition Service Regions



This publication supersedes PA-667, "U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Donation Program".

Programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are available to all eligible people regardless of race, color, or national origin.

May 1981